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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 000203

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DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, AF/PDPA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: HUMBLE FATHER AND PRODIGAL SON: WADE AND SECK
RECONCILE?

REF: A. DAKAR 0149

[1](#)B. 05 DAKAR 2979
[1](#)C. 05 DAKAR 2479
[1](#)D. 05 DAKAR 1721

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROY L. WHITAKER, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) With his Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) in shambles and poll numbers apparently dismal a month before elections, President Abdoulaye Wade has absolved ex-Prime Minister Idrissa Seck of alleged crimes and asked his one-time "spiritual son" for reconciliation. Seck's opposition coalition partner, though, Socialist Party leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng, told the Ambassador that despite Wade's claim, Seck will pursue an independent presidential candidacy. No doubt distrusting the president who imprisoned him and tried to disgrace him, Seck is seeking to assure that Wade's offer has the blessing of both the Tidjane and Mouride Islamic brotherhoods. Suggested press guidance is in para.
[1](#)9. END SUMMARY.

WHAT BENEFITS OF INCUMBENCY?

[1](#)2. (C) The ruling PDS is fraying at the edges and fractured down the middle. Disgruntled would-be National Assembly deputies have protested Wade's failure to add them to the candidate list. To mollify them, Wade used the Council of State's (a high administrative court's) invalidation of parliamentary candidate allotments to delay legislative elections, even as he prepares to re-create a Senate to provide more patronage jobs (Ref A). Though challenged by the opposition and despite Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom's January 24 admission to the Ambassador that the problems could be fixed in a day, Wade is determined to press ahead with the postponement, hiding behind the requirements of the new and not yet publicly available electoral code.

[1](#)3. (C) Having put off his parliamentary reckoning, Wade had to deal with split-off of Seck's sympathizers and the real possibility of defeat. Ziguinchor Deputy Mayor Yaye Mane, a Socialist who is no friend of Wade but usually reliable, told visiting AF/W Desk Officer Dorsey Lockhart of new private PDS polls showing Wade winning only about 30 percent of the presidential vote, or almost exactly what he won in the first round of the 2000 election. Facing this threat and described by leading daily "Walfadjri" as "bruised and battered," Wade called on Seck spiritual guide, Tidjane spokesman Abdoul Aziz Sy al Ibn (Junior) to bring Seck to the presidency. After a three-way meeting and a carefully photographed handshake, the President announced "... I am after all the father and my duty always is to reassemble the sons."

HMM ... NOT SO FAST

¶4. (C) There is firm and virtually universal conviction that Wade offered Seck a really good political deal. Some think Wade agreed to Seck's longstanding demand that he step aside as PDS presidential candidate, while others figure Wade offered him a vice-presidency, presidency of the Senate or National Assembly and recognition as eventual successor, but none of this is substantiated. At the same time that Wade and Seck were meeting, former Minister Awa Gueye Kebe was filing Seck's papers for a presidential bid. In any case Seck has postponed sine die his reply to Wade while he tries to assure that his foxy former mentor keeps to whatever word he gave. To gain that assurance, he has gone to Touba to consult with the Mouride Khalif, Wade's spiritual guide and the only person with significant sway over the President.

¶5. (C) At the same time, Seck's political allies are in shock or dismay. Pikine MP Samba Bathily told us he is dead set against reconciliation with Wade, and that he is organizing others on Seck's parliamentary candidate list to lobby their leader to stand firm. On January 23, Seck's opposition co-leader, the Socialist Tanor Dieng, told the Ambassador he fully expects Seck to continue to pursue an independent presidential candidacy. Public reaction has ranged from disgust to relief, but Seck's young supporters and his base in Thies have been mostly critical of the rumored reconciliation.

CORRALLING OTHER ERRANT SHEEP

¶6. (SBU) Following Wade's declaration of reconciliation with Seck, the PDS announced two other rebels were returning to the party. Ex-Environment Minister Modou Diagne Fada, whom

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PDS Parliamentary Questeur (whip) Lamine Thiam told us a week ago Wade would "crush," will come back after a six-week departure. Jean Paul Dias, Wade's volatile and decades-long "frenemy," will also rejoin the PDS.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Wade says his political nemesis Seck has accepted an offer of reconciliation, but this is not yet certain. Seck was Wade's protege for over a decade, learned politics at his master's side and understands his capacity for infinite flexibility, and therefore distrusts any promises unaccompanied by iron-clad guarantees. The only guarantee possible in Senegalese society is the active participation of religious authorities, meaning the Tidjanes' Junior to underwrite Seck's commitments and the Mouride Khalif for Wade's promises.

¶8. (C) Even if a deal is ratified though, it will not be easy going. Wade's inner circle, including son Karim, all hate Seck with sincere and particular venom, and it is hard to imagine them deliberating calmly with Seck in their midst. Seck's closest advisors all made painful decisions to abandon Wade, and many paid a political price for doing so. Others in the PDS, including many long-time Wade militants, back Seck silently either as a means of redressing Wade's leadership shortcomings or as a younger alternative. We see Wade's announcement of reconciliation as the beginning rather than the culmination of negotiations between the two men.
END COMMENT.

SUGGESTED CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE

¶9. (U) Suggested contingency press guidance follows:

SENEGAL

JANUARY 24, 2007

CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE: &U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
POSTPONEMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN SENEGAL8

Q: What is the U.S. reaction to the Senegalese government,s decision to postpone the parliamentary election that was expected to take place on February 25, 2007 until June 3, 2007?

A: Information Minister Bacar Dia announced on January 18 that the legislative election will be held on June 3, but this new date must be approved by the National Assembly and could be subject to judicial review.

This second postponement of parliamentary polls, which were originally scheduled to take place by June 2006, is cause for concern in terms of timely and regular elections in Senegal.

Q: Does the postponement of the parliamentary election affect the presidential election scheduled to take place on February 25, 2007?

A: The U.S. Government fully expects that the presidential election in Senegal will go forward on February 25.

Q: What will be the impact of President Abdoulaye Wade,s January 22 decision to accept his former Prime Minister and presidential candidate Idrissa Seck back in the fold of the ruling PDS party?

A: The U.S. has no comment. We refer you to the Government of Senegal and other concerned Senegalese parties for possible response.

Q: Given the announcement by Wade of Seck,s return to the PDS, does the U.S. now consider Tanor to be a more viable presidential candidate?

A: The U.S. has no candidate) that is something for the people of Senegal to decide.

If pressed:

Q: But isn,t the U.S. Government concerned about the emerging pattern of bureaucratic manipulation that has enabled President Wade to twice postpone parliamentary elections?

A: In a word, yes, we are concerned and we continue to advocate the timely conduct of constitutionally prescribed elections, in a peaceful and transparent manner.

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If asked only:

Q: What was the purpose of the U.S. Ambassador,s meeting on January 23 with Senegalese Socialist Party Leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng?

A: As part of our Embassy,s customary practice of meeting with representatives of the Government of Senegal, political parties, civil society, and religious groups, U.S. Ambassador Janice Jacobs met with Socialist Party First Secretary Ousmane Tanor Dieng on January 23.

It is standard practice for diplomatic missions to solicit views from the widest range of contacts from all sectors of society.

Background: On January 18, the GOS announced it would postpone legislative elections in response to a January 12 decision by Senegal's highest administrative body, the Council of State. The Council had voided President Abdoulaye Wade's decree allotting National Assembly seats on grounds that it disregarded demographic criteria in defining electoral constituencies. The opposition and many local

civil society organizations have criticized the election postponement. On January 22, President Wade announced that he had invited former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck to rejoin him and the ruling Senegalese Democratic Party from which Seck had been expelled. Seck, who is in an electoral alliance including Socialist Party leader Tanor Dieng, has not yet responded to President Wade's invitation.

JACOBS